

So what can I say about my experience at the Meeting of the Minds? Educational – Enlightening –Exhilarating! I constantly felt humbled being in the presence of the greatest minds in the motorcycle rights community and it made me wonder if I'll still be here in 20, 30 or 40+ years staying active in what I care so much about. I had many great opportunities to speak with others from around the nation and it was so encouraging to hear how we all face the same problems and by being to talk to each other we're able to share our experiences and knowledge so we can all go back home a little smarter and with some new ideas. I know I feel a little smarter after attending the break-out sessions on your rights during a traffic stop, Awareness Rallies and Wayne's Share the Road presentation. Slider's general session presentation was another great one to hear, the pictures and videos do a wonderful job of showing the real-life side of these road conditions and situations that we all talk about. Of course my most memorable experience will be the YAS panel discussion – I hope myself and the other winners were able to bring to everyone in attendance some useful insight into the minds of young motorcycle activists. I know I was very happy to meet the other two winners and hear what they had to say. I must say though that I was relieved when it was over and glad I didn't trip over my own feet walking up to the front! The YAS Scholarship program is a very worthwhile program and I hope it will continue to be a part of the Meeting of the Minds for many years to come.

Meetings like these are so valuable to our cause because of what we can learn and take back with us. My husband and I talked almost all the way home– who we talked to, what the sessions were like, what we learned, and what we can take back to our Chapter and other members. I wish everyone could attend one of these meetings because it opens your eyes to the world of motorcyclist rights and what is really going on. So many people, whether they're a member of a motorcycle rights organization or not, simply don't know what is happening. Right after we returned from MOTM, my husband and I met a couple from Wisconsin that recently purchased a motorcycle. They had heard of ABATE and knew about helmet laws but were rather shocked to hear some of the things we had heard at MOTM about things like noise restrictions and motorcycle-only road stops. I hope that they will consider joining ABATE when they returned home but I think it just goes to show that we still need to continually work on getting our message out to people. We're not just about helmet laws but more about 'let those who ride decide' and 'education not legislation'.

Something else that I want to talk about is bringing in younger people as members and what to do when they finally get there. I honestly believe there are many younger riders out there that would enjoy joining an organization to meet others to go on rides with and share the enjoyment of motorcycling. Most of my friends, motorcycle riders or not, are tired of hearing

about politics and think it just messy and confusing and simply don't want to get involved.

When I try to talk to my friends that are riders about joining ABATE, some just turn away saying they don't get involved in politics. It's hard to get them to see that even though they may not want to get involved, politics are already involved with them and it's up to them to decide if they want to be in control or let the politicians control them. I think it's been very helpful to talk to them about specific things going on in other states that I've learned about at MOTM and Heartland STEAM. By telling them exactly what has happened in other places they start thinking about how it would be if they couldn't make those cool aftermarket changes to their bikes or couldn't just ride down the road without getting stopped simply because they're riding a motorcycle. Everyone knows about the helmet issue but there are so many other things out there that could affect us that we need to also be talking about these issues as well. Another tactic I have used to get new people to join is to help with our community service and volunteer events. These are things everyone seems to get behind and can be an easy way to gradually get people involved. But no matter how you get that person to join, the follow up is critical to get them to stay. If you signed them up, you need to be involved in getting them to come to meetings and events - be the encouraging voice to get them involved and be the one to ask them to renew and to volunteer to help with an event. I know this works first hand because the person that encouraged my husband and I to join is now one of our greatest friends and we now plan a yearly week long motorcycle trip together and continually work together in our local Chapter – thanks Monty!! It's all been such a wonderful experience so far and I know I'm only just getting started. So I just want to say thank you to everyone out there that has ever encouraged a new, young rider to become a member, helped welcome a new member into your group, and has ever had a hand in preserving motorcycle rights